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LETTER

TO THE

AUTHOR

OF THE

CENSOR.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy Voice like a Trumpet, and shew my People their Transgression, and the House of Jacob their Sins—Every one loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards: they judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come unto them.

ISAIAH.

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D U B L I N :

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LETTER, &c.

S I R,

THERE is no greater, or more evident Source of the Calamities, which the People suffer under monarchical Governments, than that the Ears of Princes are generally shut up from the Complaints of their Subjects, and their Understandings depriv'd of discerning the real Situation they may be in.

For tho' I am firmly persuaded that a great Share of Power will alone hardly ever fail intoxicating human Minds; tho' the Desire of knowing no Controul, and Ambition are Passions, which Angels could not once withstand, I say, notwithstanding howsoever intoxicated and blinded the Hearts of Princes may be by these Passions, yet as Humanity will now and then take its Turn of Sway in every Breast, the Voice of a People, groaning under Calamities, could not fail of sometimes making its Impressions; and for this Hope there is still the greater Room, when we consider that the Welfare of a Nation is always connected, and oftentimes very visibly, with that of its Rulers, how despotick soever they may be. But this Resource is generally cut off by those Whisperers and Harpies, who wholly surround the Throne of Majesty. *De Ratz* therefore

fore well observes, that it is impossible for Princes to have a right Notion of the Public, since Flattery, the Plague of Courts, infects them to such a Degree, as to bring them into a Delirium, past Remedy, upon that Article.

But were we to suppose a Prince so totally possess'd by Pride and Absurdity, as to be incapable of admitting the least Interval of Reflection on the Condition and Sufferings of his People; yet the Affairs of this World are so constituted, that it is difficult to conceive, that such a Prince should not have some prevailing Peculiarity of Temper, some favourite Passion, the Gratification of which shall, some Time or other, necessarily fall in with the Wishes and Welfare of his Subjects. Yet even here shall their Expectations be often baffled, and so much shall he be the Puppet of that Minister, by whom he is actuated, that in that Case this Inclination shall be either stifled, or diverted.

The *Chinese*, a discerning intelligent Nation, are so fully satisfied of the Inconveniences, which must inseparably attend that People, who are not furnished with the Opportunity and Means of laying their Sentiments before their Prince, tho' they acknowledge the most arbitrary and unlimited Authority in their Emperors, yet in this Respect they have made a Provision worthy the Imitation of Nations, who most pride themselves in the Name of Freemen. For, this Purpose, the Laws have

have establish'd publick *Censors*, who are obliged by their Duty to admonish the Emperor by Petitions, which are dispers'd through the Empire, and which the Emperor cannot reject without hurting his own Reputation. The Nation looking upon this Employment as an heroick Bravery, the Emperor would do them too much Honour, if he should happen to use them ill, and draw upon himself some odious Names, which the Historians would with great Care transmit to Posterity.

These *Censors* seldom or never will be deny'd. If the Court, or the great Tribunals, endeavour to evade the Justice of their Complaints, by some Rebuff, they return to the Charge, and make it appear that they have not answer'd conformably to the Laws. Some of these *Censors* have persever'd two Years together in accusing a Viceroy, supported by the Grandees, without minding Delays or Opposition, or being frightened at the most terrifying Menaces, till at length the Court has been forced to degrade him, that it might preserve the good Opinion of the People.

Nay, so connected with the Interest of his People do the *Chinese* consider every Part of the Emperor's Conduct, that even his private Failings, and Family Transactions escape not the Notice of these *Censors*, who join them in their Remonstrances to those of a more public Nature.

Nature. In the Reign of *Chi-tsong* we find a Petition presented to that Emperor, 'in which he was advised to take more Care of public Affairs. It represented, that for 20 Years past the Laws had insensibly lost their Force, and that the Empire was going to Destruction; that he seldom convers'd with the Prince his Heir; that his most faithful and honest Vassals were either despised, or ill used without a Cause, or upon the slightest Suspicions; that he spent his Time amidst a Number of Concubines, despising the Empress, his lawful Wife; that he employed Men to command his Armies who were unskill'd in the Art of War, and who are fonder of Gold and Silver than Honour and Glory; that the Finances were every Day exhausted by his ridiculous Expences, &c.'

So much was a publick Disquisition into the Behaviour of those, who govern'd them, thought necessary in *China*, that by an Ordinance of the Emperor *Chun*, for which amongst other Laws he has ever since been venerated as a *Hero*, 'every Person is permitted to write on a Table, expos'd to public View, whatever he thinks blameable in the *Emperor's* Conduct.'

The *British* Nations, amongst other Advantages, which they enjoy, possess, in an eminent Degree, this most valuable one of having the Throne always open to the Petitions of the Subjects, whenever they think proper to make

make use of this Right, and lay their Complaints before it; a Privilege, that has always been asserted and maintained, notwithstanding the most arbitrary and artful Attempts of censoring and restraining it, as *seditions* and *sumultuous*; a Privilege not very long since, confirm'd to us, in the most explicit and declaratory Manner, at a Time when our *Rights* and *Liberties* were relcued from Slavery and arbitrary Power; a Privilege, the Exertion of which may some Time or other be the only Thing that can preserve to us those *Rights* and *Liberties*, whenever they shall be betray'd or given up, through the Meaness, the Pusillanimity, and Corruption of those, into whose Hands the Care of them shall be entrusted.

If ever that should become our Case, it is from their own Resolutions the People must expect to be sav'd. The Petitions and general Voice of a Nation must of Consequence never fail having their Weight with a good *Prince* on the Throne, and they will always be formidable to a bad one, howsoever surrounded by his mercenary Legions; for as a celebrated Writer observes, *the People ought always to be accounted for much, whensoever they account themselves all in all.*

I am sensible that wicked and interested *Ministers*, who have drawn the Odium of a Nation on themselves, by their own senseless and corrupt Management, and who dread nothing so much as a free Disquisition into their

their Conduct will endeavour to throw the falsest Colours on this most gentle and constitutional Method of addressing the Throne for Redress; but these are Men, who most justly deserve the Curse denounced in *Scripture* against those, who call Evil Good, and Good Evil; Men, who as *Cato* said of the degenerate *Romans*, have long since forgot to give Things their true Appellations; who call *Meanness* and *Adulation*, *Decency*; and *Servility*, a due *Submission to Government*; who call the *Groanings* of an oppressed Nation the *Breathings* of *Rebellion*; and the *Spirit of Liberty* Tumult and lawless *Riot*. But God forbid that we should ever suffer ourselves to be imposed on by any gross and low Artifices. Our Privileges are a Legacy, which our Ancestors have bravely transmitted down to us, seal'd often by their own Blood; and it is a Duty we owe Posterity, to hand them down free as we receiv'd them: In what regards the Public, no Man is Master of his own Actions, nor can he give up the Right it has to his Service. But our Case is such, that we can hardly ever be forced out of our Liberties; and I hope we shall never become so contemptible, as to be meanly juggled out of them, or to suffer Despair, that Bane of all generous Resolutions, to sink us down to that lamentable Situation, describ'd by *Tully*, when he says, *Nunc quidem novo quodam Morbo Civitas moritur, ut cum omnes Acta improbane, quarantur, gemant, &c.*

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